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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5808
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 GABORONE 005064

DEPT. FOR AF - SCHNEIDMAN, AF/S - RENDER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: STRENGTHENING MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

REF: A) STATE 119706, B) GABORONE 1355, C) GABORONE 5057

SUMMARY

1. IN THE PAST YEAR SOUTHERN AFRICA HAS WITNESSED A SERIES OF ELECTIONS. SOME, SUCH AS THOSE IN MOZAMBIQUE, ZIMBABWE, AND TANZANIA, HAVE BEEN HOTLY CONTESTED IN SOME AREAS, WITH QUESTIONS RAISED AS TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. OTHERS, SUCH AS THOSE IN BOTSWANA, NAMIBIA, AND MAURITIUS, HAVE BEEN GENERALLY ACCEPTED AS MODELS OF ELECTORAL LEGITIMACY. THE ATTENTION GIVEN TO THESE ELECTIONS, COUPLED WITH THE EMERGENCE OF SIGNIFICANT PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITIONS IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES, HAS GIVEN RISE TO A NUMBER OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN-LED INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE MULTI-PARTYISM AND DEMOCRATIC PERFORMANCE IN THE REGION. THIS PROVIDES US A UNIQUE AND TIMELY OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT THESE DEVELOPMENTS. WE RECOMMEND DOING SO, AND PROPOSE THAT THE DEPARTMENT ALLOCATE \$250,000 IN FY01 ESF TO HELP ESTABLISH A PERMANENT CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND TO EXPLORE THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A POLITICAL PARTY TRAINING INSTITUTE. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

2. OUR REQUEST FOLLOWS THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF THE "ENGINEERING DEMOCRATIC CHANGE: THE EXPERIENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA" CONFERENCE HELD SEPTEMBER 28-30 IN WINDHOEK USING FY00 ESF (REF C). THE CONFERENCE WAS ORGANIZED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA, THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE, AND THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (UNAM/UWC/NDI GROUP), AND WAS ATTENDED BY POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS FROM GOVERNING AND OPPOSITION PARTIES AROUND THE REGION. THE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS ISSUED AN EIGHT-POINT CONSENSUS DOCUMENT THAT OUTLINES THEIR DECISION TO FORM A CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (CCPP) AND TO EXPLORE THE IDEA OF FORMING A REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTY TRAINING INSTITUTE. THE PARTICIPANTS ALSO PROPOSED THAT THE UNAM/UWC/NDI GROUP ORGANIZE A MEETING IN MARCH 2001 TO OFFICIALLY LAUNCH THE CCPP AND THE INSTITUTE. BOTH INITIATIVES WILL EMBRACE GOVERNING AND OPPOSITION PARTY LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE IDEOLOGICAL SPECTRUM, WITH THE AIM OF IMPROVING POLITICAL PARTIES' ABILITY TO FUNCTION AS DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS.

OUR PROPOSAL

3. USAID'S REGIONAL CENTER FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA (RCSA) PARTICIPATED IN FOLLOW-ON MEETINGS WITH THE UNAM/UWC/NDI GROUP IN CAPE TOWN ON OCTOBER 18 AND WITH UNAM IN GABORONE ON OCTOBER 27. THESE MEETINGS REAFFIRMED THE GROUP'S RESOLVE TO CARRY THE PROCESS THROUGH TO THE MARCH 2001 MEETING AND BEYOND. WE WOULD LIKE TO BUILD ON OUR INITIAL ESF INVESTMENT IN THIS PROCESS AND ENCOURAGE THIS INITIATIVE OF POLITICAL PARTIES FROM THROUGHOUT THE SADC REGION BY PROVIDING ADDITIONAL ESF FUNDING IN SUPPORT OF THESE EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN REGIONAL DEMOCRATIC

PERFORMANCE. WE PROPOSE THAT THE DEPARTMENT ALLOCATE \$250,000 IN FY01 ESF TO ALLOW RCSA TO:

-- SUPPORT THE MARCH 2001 MEETING;

-- ASSIST IN ESTABLISHING THE CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES THAT IS EXPECTED TO BE FORMALIZED AT THAT MEETING; AND

-- INVESTIGATE MECHANISMS FOR ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS.

¶4. OF THIS AMOUNT, WE PROPOSE THAT APPROXIMATELY \$100,000 BE USED TO SUPPORT PREPARING AND CONVENING THE MARCH 2001 MEETING, \$100,000 TO HELP TO ESTABLISH THE CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE, AND \$50,000 TO CONTRIBUTE TO EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH THE TRAINING INSTITUTE.

COMMENT

¶5. THE UNAM/UWC/NDI GROUP'S INITIATIVE COMES AT AN IMPORTANT INTER-ELECTION PERIOD, WHEN ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GOVERNING AND OPPOSITION PARTIES WILL BE FORMULATED AND CONSOLIDATED, AND CAN EVOLVE INTO INFLUENTIAL, POSITIVE CODES OF CONDUCT FOR POLITICAL PARTY ACTION DURING THE NEXT ROUND OF ELECTIONS. THIS INITIATIVE REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD IN PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC NORMS FOR POLITICAL BEHAVIOR IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. IN OUR VIEW, THE INITIATIVE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO AMELIORATE DISCORD CAUSED BY A "WINNER-TAKE-ALL" MENTALITY AND TO DEMONSTRATE REAL POLITICAL WILL BY THE REGION'S PARTY LEADERS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

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